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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003543

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2016

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SUBJECT: TURKISH AMBASSADOR TELLS CHARGE: IRAQ MUST DO MORE
ON PKK

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a September 20 meeting with the Turkish Ambassador to Iraq Unal Cevikoz, Charge gave Cevikoz a readout of U.S. Special Envoy for Countering the PKK General (Ret.) Joseph Ralston's September 14-15 meetings in Iraq to prepare for the upcoming visit to Washington by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan. Cevikoz noted that Ankara was not satisfied with the results of Ralston's recent visits, stating that Iraq has "fallen short of adequately demonstrating the political will" to resolve the PKK issue. They then discussed the confusion between the Iraqi Prime Minister's office and the Iraqi Embassy in Ankara over who had been selected as the Iraqi interlocutor for the Trilateral Talks, Amir Ahmad Hassan (a Sunni general) or Talib al-Kanani (Prime Minister's advisor on military affairs). While agreeing that the situation was frustrating, the Charge counseled patience, stressing that it was more important to take the time to appoint the right candidate.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In a September 20 meeting with the Turkish Ambassador to Iraq Unal Cevikoz, Charge gave Cevikoz a readout of U.S. Special Envoy for Countering the PKK General (Ret.) Joseph Ralston's September 14-15 meetings in Iraq to prepare for the upcoming visit to Washington by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan. Cevikoz told Charge he had met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki a few days ago, and reemphasized Ankara's desire to see an appropriate Iraqi interlocutor named on the PKK issue and a public statement released by Maliki condemning the PKK as a terrorist organization. According to Cevikoz, Maliki's response was that he considered the PKK a terrorist organization and recognized several other nations had already designated it as such. Iraq did not need to make a separate designation of PKK as a terrorist organization but could rely on the fact that this had already been done by others. For the kind of definitive statement Ankara is seeking, Maliki reportedly stated, the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) would have to be involved, lengthening the process significantly.

¶3. (C) Cevikoz then noted that Ankara was not satisfied with the results. Iraq has "fallen short of adequately demonstrating the political will" to make the tough decisions on countering the PKK threat, Cevikoz stated, and Ankara was not impressed with the statement from the Prime Minister's office, which Turkish Government officials had noted came from the "Prime Minister's Press Office," not from Maliki himself. Cevikoz stated that it was his personal belief that Ralston himself would not be pleased with the Iraqi statement, and that if Barzani had been more supportive of the statement it not might have been so weak. Cevikoz opined

that the solution might be to put more pressure on Barzani, as this was the likely standing block and not the CoR.

Confusion Over the Iraqi Envoy to the Trilateral Talks

14. (C) Cevikoz reported that the status of the Iraqi Envoy to the Trilateral Talks was unclear. He stated that the Iraqi Embassy in Ankara had sent a formal note to the Turkish Government informing them that a Sunni general, Amir Ahmad Hassan, had been nominated by the Prime Minister to be the Iraqi envoy. However, in a separate phone conversation with GOI spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh, Cevikoz had been informed that Maliki had appointed his military advisor Talib al-Kanani to be the envoy. For clarity on the situation, Cevikoz contacted the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which informed him that they had never notified the Iraqi Embassy in Ankara about such an appointment, and suggested that the information may have come from a Ministry of Defense through the Defense Attache. Cevikoz strongly pushed for an Envoy with the authority to speak for the entire GOI.

15. (C) The Charge replied that the Embassy is also hearing the same rumors, and informed Cevikoz that we would follow-up with the PM to get more clarity. In the meantime, the Charge stressed, it was more important to get the right person rather than to appoint any interlocutor in a hurry. It should be done right the first time to ensure that the person selected would be able to make decisions with authority, be trusted by both Maliki and Barzani, and have the appropriate background to deal with the issues.

Turkish Steps to Move Forward with this Process?

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16. (C) The Charge asked if the Turks had made any progress in naming a Turkish liaison officer to accompany Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Coalition Forces in confirming the closures of the PKK front offices. Cevikoz replied that the difficulty lay in Turkish troops not being allowed to move from Camp Victory, and suggested a Turkish Embassy official accompany the mission. Charge replied that it might be more suitable to have all Coalition military personnel. Cevikoz agreed to cable back to Ankara for instructions.

17. (C) When asked whether Ankara planned to do anything to move this process forward while Baghdad was selecting an interlocutor for the Trilateral Talks, Cevikoz replied that he was only aware of the October 2 meeting between Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and President Bush in Washington. In addition, Turkish Foreign Minister Gul would be meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari on 21 September on the margins of the Iraqi Compact Meeting, and Cevikoz expected that the PKK issue would be discussed.

SPECKHARD